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DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF CLASSICAL RAGTIME

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To preserve classical ragtime music and to pursue such other activities as shall serve to maintain and develop interest in classical ragtime music and music related thereto.

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1980

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RAGTIME . . . UNDER YOUR HAT

Quite frequently, we receive letters from members which seem to indicate that in their minds, membership in The Ragtime Society, Inc. is essentially the same as subscribing to a magazine or periodical, ie. pay the subscription rate and sit back and enjoy the information and articles contained in the publication.

It is possible, of course, to do just that. However, THE RAGTIMER, the official publication of the 'Society', should embody input from the membership at large. Often, in the past, we have had to dip into the archives of recorded ragtime experiences and events in order to produce a Ragtimer. Actually, this is not a negative approach, as it does document in one publication the whole spectrum of ragtime history. Also, it has been well received by members who would otherwise never see the material.

Ideally though, THE RAGTIMER should contain more original material of a contemporary nature written by members for members. The phrase 'roving reporter' comes immediately to mind, and this perhaps best describes the function. There's a lot happening out there, in a ragtime sense, and it should be recorded for immediate edification and future reference. Original articles of historical significance, book and concert reviews, ragtime happenings, etc. will all broaden the scope and interest of THE RAGTIMER to YOU the members. We are, of course, still interested and appreciative of receiving material clipped or Xeroxed from newspapers or magazines.

Don't be an 'armchair' member. Participate! Remember, it's a great feeling... to have YOUR OWN article in print.

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RECORD REVIEW

by
TEX
WYNDHAM

Folkways RBF 40 'Those Ragtime Banjos', compiled and annotated by David A. Jasen

Selections, Banjoists, and Accompanists: Chatterbox Rag - Fred Van Eps w. Orch.; Teasin' The Cat - Fred Van Eps, Frank Banta (piano), and Nathan Glantz (also saxophone); Grace And Beauty - Fred Van Eps and Frank Banta (piano); Florida Rag, Buffalo Rag - Vess L. Ossman w. Orch.; Persian Lamb Rag - Vess L. Ossman and Theodore Morse (piano); Ross' Dog Trot, Ross' Reel - Black Face Eddie Ross w. Orch.; Get Goin' - Pete Mandell w. Savoy Orpheans; Banjomania - Pete Mandell w. piano; The Ghost of The Banjo, Banjokes - Roy Smeck and Art Kahn (piano); Banjoviality, Butterfingers - Len Fillis and Sid Bright (piano); Symphonola - Harry Reser and Henry Lange (piano); That Banjo Rag - Dick Roberts, Luther 'Red' Roundtree, Vic Davis (piano), George Bruns (bass), and Monte Mountjoy, drums.

Available from Folkways Records & Service Corp., 43 West 61st St., New York City, New York 10023.

This compilation surveys banjo recordings of ragtime from the middle ragtime years through the 1920s, contrasting mostly single-string plucking on the earlier sides (perhaps necessitated by the primitive recording processes, which seem a little distant, don't separate sounds well, and call for fairly strident performances lacking in dynamics) with the full-chord solo style that came in with jazz. Side One presents several fine seldom-recorded compositions, but except for a jaunty, foot-tapping ride on 'Chatterbox' and a super, swinging duo version of 'Grace', competent-but-inflexible renditions combine with inevitably scratchy acoustics to make this part of the program less for enjoyable listening than an excellent-for-what-it-is collection of museum pieces for ragtime historians. Side Two more than makes up for these deficiencies with a half-dozen tremendous duets on exceptionally intricate novelty rags, executed with captivating zest and bravura technique, the six selections nicely framed by a deft banjo-and-hot-dance-band rouser ('Goin'') and a hard-charging banjo band ('That Banjo Rag' - a 1951 side that is the only thing here from the revival period). The virtuosity of such artists as Smeck, Kahn, Reser, and Lange leaves me slack-jawed, as they whip through fast complex licks as cleanly and comfortably as you please - with plenty of space allotted to the dazzling pianistics that alternate with the fancy fretwork. Definitely worthwhile, but with reservations as noted above.

* * *

Jim Taylor Presents JTP 113 'Boogie, Blues & Rags', piano solos by Bob Milne.

Selections: Black And White Rag, Steamboat Boogie Blues, Mimi, Careless Love, Mama's Blues, Ragged Music Box, Flypaper Rag, Frankie And Johnny, Elite

Syncopations, Boxcar Boogie, After Tonight, Apple Tree Grove.

Available @ $7.00 postpaid (U.S. residents) from Jim Taylor Presents, 12311 Gratiot Avenue, Detroit, Michigan 48205. Copies autographed by the artist available @ $8.00 ($10.00 outside U.S.) from Bob Milne, Box 586, Lapeer, Michigan 48446.

After several years of well-received performances at the Bash, Bob Milne now has this impressive debut album available so that Society members in general, not to mention ragophiles everywhere, may enjoy his broad mastery of rag, stride and boogie, all of it played with that touch of gracefulness and reserve permeating even Bob's most abandoned moments. The six Milne originals include 'Ragged Music Box', a charming descriptive number that has been a special favorite with Bash audiences; two rolling boogies ('Boxcar' clatters down the track with particularly compelling force); and three rags ranging from the jingling 'Flypaper' to the delicate 'Grove'. The vintage material covers crackling country-style rag ('Frankie' and 'Elite', both unusual-yet-successful interpretations of these familiar titles), two-fisted full-bodied piano-rollistics ('Mama's' and 'Tonight'), and fertile ragged-variations-on-a-theme ('Careless'). An accomplished player in several styles, featuring a distinctive light-but-driving rhythm made up of rolled-octave downbeats and sharply-snapped upbeat chords, Milne has a product here that rewards the serious listener and entertains the casual one.

* * *

Vanguard VSD 79429 'The Great American Piano Bench: A Turn-Of-The-Century Keyboard Sampler', piano solos by Max Morath

Selections: Solace, Song Without Words, Castles' Half And Half, The Perfect Melody, Pelham Waltzes, Marionette, Minuet, Wa-Wan Choral, Ein Liedchen, Bethena, To A Wild Rose.

All readers of this column are, or ought to be, fans of that superb ragtime entertainer Max Morath, and should be interested in his latest record even when, for once, it contains no ragtime. Moreover, as dedicated ragophiles, we want to appraise the non-rag work of composers like Scott Joplin ('Solace', 'Bethena'), May Aufderheide ('Pelham Waltzes'), James Reese Europe and Ford T. Dabney ('Castles' Half And Half'), and maybe Felix Arndt ('Marionette'), for the additional perspective it provides on their ragtime output. Max's direct, uncluttered performances of these numbers keep you on board ('Pelham', a compelling waltz, thrives in Morath's well-built arrangement; 'Half' has the distinction of a brisk 5/4 rhythm; and 'Marionette', if not a rag, is so close to one that you're sure to like it) but the strength of his playing isn't really enough to overcome the weaknesses in the ephemeral parlor sketches that fill out the program ('Liedchen' is an exception, a pretty waltz that has more depth to it than the others). The historically-minded ragtimer will find this a unique opportunity to hear the musical environment in which ragtime took root, but don't expect a treasure trove of unjustly-neglected masterpieces, or anything close to it.

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RAGTIME IN OLD NEW YORK

by Edward A. Berlin

A type of ragtime was known to New York's minstrel stages by the late 1880's, but it was not until the mid-1890's that ragtime appeared as a separate style with a distinct name. Its introduction to New York in 1896 is credited to Ben Harney, described in magazines and newspapers of the time as "the first white man to play ragtime," but rumoured among black musicians to have been a mulatto who passed for white. When Harney opened at Tony Pastor's 14th Street Theatre, a vaudeville house acclaimed for acts suitable even for "the fair sex," he was an immediate hit and made Pastor's (situated in the politically infamous Tammany Hall Building, north side of 14th Street between Irving Place and 3rd Avenue) New York's first popular center of ragtime. In February, 1900, the "U.S. ragtime championship" was held there, with Mike Bernard declared the winner.

Aside from Pastor's and other vaudeville houses, ragtime flourished in the black saloons of the Tenderloin. The Tenderloin, extending from 23rd to 42nd streets along 6th Avenue and branching west, was New York's Tammany-protected sin district, featuring saloons, gambling houses, and brothels catering to society's highest, as well as lowest, elements. It was from one of these saloons - a club called Ike Hines - that James Weldon Johnson, in the Autobiography of an Ex-Colored man, drew this depiction of a ragtime improvisation:

The barbaric harmonies, the audacious resolutions, often consisting of an abrupt jump from one key to another, the intricate rhythms in which accents fell in the most unexpected places, but in which the beat was never lost. The dexterity of his left hand in making rapid octave runs and jumps ... and with his right hand he frequently swept the keyboard with clean-cut chromatics."

Ike Hines' was a more genteel establishment than most, drawing its clientele primarily from black intellectual and entertainment circles. Its floor was carpeted, windows draped with lace, and its walls covered with photos and lithographs of virtually every prominent Negro, from Frederic Douglass to contemporary jockeys and minstrels. In addition to ragtime piano and other music, the club offered entertainment ranging from acrobatic acts to poetry readings.

The most famous of the Tenderloin ragtime clubs was Barron Wilkins' Little Savoy Club, which featured the music of "One-Leg" Willie Joseph, a pianist much admired by Eubie Blake. Originally situated on 32nd Street, it moved to 35th Street and 8th Avenue in the early teens, and then to Harlem just before World War I. At its last site, Luckey Roberts was the house pianist, and Jelly Roll Morton a frequent "guest artist." On the same site, some 40 years later, baseball great Roy Campanella opened a liquor store.

During the first two decades of the new century, the centers of ragtime gradually moved uptown, first to The Jungles (59th to 65th streets, west of 9th Avenue),

and then to Harlem. The hottest club in the Jungles was The Jungles Casino (65th Street), a dingy, damp, basement dance hall that featured some of the period's greatest talents, including James P. Johnson, Luckey Roberts, Abba Labba, and Willie "The Lion" Smith. Since it was near the piers that serviced ships from Savannah and Charleston, it became the favorite hangout of seamen from those cities, and out of the improvised dancing and music at the Jungles Casino evolved two of the major symbols of "the jazz age" - the Charleston dance, and James P. Johnson's popular song by that name.

While the evolution of a musical style was the most significant development of the Jungles and Harlem clubs (among them, Jim Allan's, at 61st and 10th; Georgia Lee's, on 62nd, Phil Watkins', on 61st, The Elk's Cafe, on Lenox and 137th; The Campus, where Eubie Blake worked, on Columbus and 104th), at the time, the manner of presentation loomed no less important. Typically, a pianist wore his overcoat until he approached the piano; then, taking it off, he would turn it inside-out, revealing a lining as fine as the outside, and lay it across the piano, along with his derby (made of the same material as the coat) and a gold- or silver-headed cane. His jacket was so heavily padded it could almost stand by itself, his trousers, fashionably cut with extra-wide cuffs; his shirt was of silk; his tie sported a diamond pin. (Jelly Roll Morton, never one to be outdone, would flash a smile of diamond studded teeth!) He would then flourish a large, silk handkerchief and dust off the dustless piano bench; now sitting at the piano, he would play his "signature chord" (each pianist, or "tickler," had a special, identifying chord), and start cookin' - perhaps with a Joplin rag, a W. C. Handy blues, or a ragged version of the "Miserere" from Il Trovatore.

New York was not the only city with a vibrant ragtime life, nor was it unique with its cast of colorful players. But to a far greater extent than any other city, New York provided the dynamics for growth, drawing together the diverse talents and styles from all parts of the nation. New York forced them to compete, mix, and coalesce, forming successive links in the evolution of swinging music.

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STEINWAYS TELL TUNEFUL PIANO SECRETS

(Ed. Comment: Pianos are not inexpensive. In fact, many are now more expensive than the family chariot. But unlike the gas guzzler rusting in your driveway, with proper care a piano can last a lifetime. The following article, reprinted from The Globe and Mail, will help you to preserve and extend the life of your piano.)

NEW YORK - With a dash of mahogany and a sprinkle of strings, Henry Engelhard Steinway cooked up the modern piano in his steamy German kitchen

143 years ago. Reminded of these moist beginnings, Mr. Steinway's great-grandsons, who now build pianos in a climate-controlled warehouse in Long Island City, N. Y., agreed that the kitchen was no place to build or to keep a piano. But since it was his first piano, the inventive cabinetmaker may be excused for subjecting it to climatic extremes, which will ultimately destroy the delicate instruments.

Even now, millions of pianos later, a veil of confusion hovers over the proper care of a piano. Should milk be used to wash the ivory keys? Do moths really chew the felt? Can the cabinet be waxed? Should Beethoven's bust be banned from its place of honor on the lid? The experts were consulted on these and other maintenance questions, and following are their answers by categories:

Climate

"Pianos should never be exposed to extremes of climate," said Henry Z. Steinway, chairman of Steinway & Sons. "It's critical that a piano be kept in a place with even temperature and humidity," added his brother, John, the senior vice president of the concern. Ideally, the brothers said, relative humidity should be kept between 45 and 50 percent and the temperature should be maintained at 72 to 75 degrees Fahrenheit.

Even temperature is important because all parts of the piano - wood, cast iron and steel - shrink and expand at different rates, causing stress on all 12,000 of the piano's pieces. Moisture causes the metals to rust and the wood to swell. Air conditioners, routinely turned on and off in summer, and arid heat in winter will "ultimately cause the piano to die of pneumonia," said John Steinway.

Repeated swellings and shrinkings cause the pin block, which holds over 200 strings under 22,000 pounds of pressure, to warp and crack. Replacing the pin block may cost more than $1,000. And if the spruce sounding board, which repeats the strings' vibrations and vastly amplifies their sound, and its supporting ribs warp and separate, the repair bill "would be very substantial," according to Steinway's service department, which no longer has time for such major repairs.

Humidistats and thermometers are recommended, but in general, if people are comfortable, pianos are too. "Damp chasers," small heating elements used to dry out piano interiors, get mixed reviews from the pianists, but many still use the devices, which cost about $15 at most piano dealers.

Best Location

"People may look at you as if you've grown an extra head, but never let anyone put your piano near open windows, air conditioners or heaters," said Andre Watts, the concert pianist who has played in Lincoln Center's Great Performer series for 11 years. The piano should be placed near an interior wall, or a well-insulated exterior wall, he said.

The Cabinet

"I've had some horrendous experiences with over-ambitious cleaning people," said Charles Wadsworth, artistic director and pianist with the C hamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. "No wax or polish of any kind should be used on the cabinet or near the keys," he said, and the Steinways agreed. If a piano's cabinet has dulled or its lacquer has cracked from too much exposure to sunlight, wax can be used. "But it should be a pure paste floor wax or something intended for fine furniture - nothing compounded or in spray cans, because these ingredients eat the lacquer and do nasty things to the finish," said John Steinway. "Perhaps the worst thing you can do is put family pictures, pots of flowers or other heavy objects on the piano. They'll vibrate and scar the finish or actually make press marks with their weight," he added.

The Keys

Despite the folklore about using milk or constantly covering the keys to keep the ivory on older pianos white, nothing will stop the natural yellowing process except direct sunlight, which was how the ivory was originally bleached, according to John Steinway. But since copious amounts of direct sunlight will ruin a piano's finish, it's not recommended. Keys made out of synthetic materials should be cleaned only with a cheesecloth dampened slightly with water and ammonia, for stains. "The easiest way to keep the keys clean is by keeping your hands clean," said Mr. Wadsworth, who said there were an "awful lot of dirty-handed pianists on the concert tour."

Tuning

A new piano should be tuned four times the first year and a minimum of twice a year thereafter "no matter how you think the piano sounds," said Edwin McArthur, a conductor whose credits include guest conducting at nearly every major symphony orchestra in this country. Pianos should be tuned in the fall, after the heat comes on, and in the spring when the heat goes off, said Ed Veisbergs, a tuner who works with touring orchestras and pianists. Tuning costs about $30; regulating the piano, which involves adjusting the action, costs about $200, and needs to be done every five years, depending on how often the piano is played.

Bugs and Storage

Moths and cockroaches have been known to dine on the felt of the hammers and mice like to sharpen their teeth on keys and wooden parts. Mr. Veisbergs said he and other piano technicians spray the piano undersides for bugs and hang moth balls inside the piano without obstructing the action or staining the finish. Poison for bugs and mice may also be left under the piano. These precautions are especially important when a piano is stored or left in an unheated house for long periods.

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PIANO BAR NOTES

by Don Asher

(Ed. Comment: Although ragtime is much more popular now than heretofore, not all ragtime oriented pianists, playing professionally, can afford the luxury of limiting their musical endeavours to ragtime. Many are obliged to perform in other musical spheres. One such area is the cocktail or piano bar environment. The following article, reprinted from Harper's April 1980, realistically depicts the slightly insane world of the typical lounge pianist.)

"I say it's 'Chopsticks' "

Lately I've been playing a lot of solo piano (as opposed to band work): piano bars, wedding receptions, private parties, and, for the past ten months, weekends at the Casablanca Restaurant in San Francisco. The Casablanca is a pleasant, medium-priced continental place whose decor, as you would expect, consists of Persian rugs, wide-blade ceiling fans, and blow-ups of Bogart, Bergman, Greenstreet, and Dooley Wilson. There is a white spinet with a tip receptable in the form of a brandy snifter, in which people may express their appreciation for any requests I might answer. This is the proprietor's idea, not mine - his way of compensating for paying me flat union scale; he is a kindly fellow (only twenty-nine), wishes he could pay me more, and unlike many of his genre, considers musicians a cut above waiters and bartenders; as a consequence I drink and dine like a king every weekend. The only drag is I have to play "As Time Goes By" at least a dozen times a night. This is one of those tunes that everyone loves but musicians. The melody is crabbed and doesn't flow and the harmonic structure is unwieldy - there's little you can do with it. Other beloved tunes musicians generally dislike are "Stardust" (with the exception of the verse, which is a beauty and which Hoagy Carmichael, according to the biography Bix: Man and Legend*, may have lifted from a Beiderbecke improvisation on "Singin' the Blues" one night during the Twenties), "The Impossible Dream," and "When the Saints Go Marching In." Conversely, people will often apologize for requesting songs that they feel musicians will consider hopelessly cornball or sentimental - "Some Day My Prince Will Come," say, or "Over the Rainbow." But these are lovely tunes with lilting melodies and fluid chord changes, though I can never play the latter without remembering what a mortician once told me: the old Garland weeper is by far the favorite selection at dog funerals.

A few weeks ago a Casablanca customer requested "Roses of Picardy." He was moderately drunk but had a look about him of intelligence and humor. I said that I hadn't played that tune in twenty years, that I feared I would stumble on it, and suggested - since he had already dropped a dollar in the kitty - that he supply me with an alternative. His eyes flared, he glowered at me; he leaned over the piano and shouted in my face, "There is no alternative - it's 'ROSES OF

*By Richard M. Sudhalter and Philip R. Evans (Arlington House, 1974).

PICARDY' OR DEATH!" This same patron, on his way out an hour later - it was a restrained evening, with little conversation or response to the music - dropped another dollar in the kitty and said, "The only way you're gonna get a rise out of this crowd is to strip to your shorts and parade around the tables playing 'I'm a Ding-Dong Daddy' on a Jew's harp." Like the quarks of physics, bar-restaurant clientele can prove both strange and charmed.

When I first started playing solo and received a request whose title rang a bell but whose melody eluded me, I would ask how the tune went. This is a mistake. There is no way you're going to get an idea of a melody from a non-musician who hums or sings a few bars; what you get is an approximation of Tourette's Syndrome, a rare and curious ailment wherein the victim twitches, grunts, and barks. To say flatly you do not know the tune is an occasion for disbelief - "Of course you do" - followed by the indecipherable grunts and barks. The only way out is to suggest an alternative (at risk of death) or, if the request is formidable - say, "Rhapsody in Blue" or "Slaughter on Tenth Avenue" - to equivocate, "That's one I don't know without the music, which is in my piano bench at home. I'll remember to bring it next time." . . . "But you don't need the music, it goes like this -" I suppose the reason a person will accept the lawyer's or accountant's evasion, "I don't have the figures at my fingertips, but I'll get back to you," but not the pianist's prevarication has to do with the immediacy of gratification: the food is on the table, the wine is flowing, the candlelit lover is waiting across the room.

I was once hired by a woman to play for her husband's surprise birthday party. She asked me to come a half-hour before the guests were due so that we could go over a list of requests she had compiled. I arrived at the appointed time with my props, which I always carry with me: 1) a pair of cushions, one fat and one skinny, to be used separately or together or in conjunction with my folded topcoat, magazines, books, tablecloths - whatever is available - to bring me to a certain height at the keyboard (I cannot function unless I am at that precise height) and 2) a wad of paper cocktail napkins, which, when folded and placed strategically between the strings, will bring flat notes reasonably up to pitch. The woman gave me a glass of wine and excused herself briefly to go across the street to borrow more glasses from a neighbor. Shortly after she left, her husband, who was supposed to be detained at the office by business colleagues until the magic moment, inexplicably let himself in the front door. He confronted me, a stranger in a pinstripe suit sitting on his divan, drinking his wine, with two cushions on my lap. It was supposed to be a surprise; there was nothing I could say. He looked from me to the cushions; he could not take his eyes from them; they must have represented to him evidence of a direct sexual threat. I watched bewilderment, hurt, fear, and anger struggle for dominance on his face. Finally it burst out of him: "Okay, buster, who the hell are you?"

Most nights I play a set of ragtime pieces. I love the Joplin rags and feel I play them with authenticity. I had just finished "Maple Leaf Rag" at the Casablanca when a middle-aged woman approached. She said, "I've just made a bet with my boyfriend that that was 'Chopsticks' you played - or a souped-up

version of it." Was this a quirk of mind or a hopeless tin ear? I wondered later: if I had played Gershwin's "Fascinating Rhythm" might she have confused it with "Too Fat Polka"? Would "Malaguena" have merged with "Indian Love Call" in the labyrinths of her cochlea?

Very few pianists are capable of playing and talking at the same time. Some old-time piano-bar masters develop the facility after long experience. On my way to a Union Square hotel job I occasionally drop into the Geary Street bars and marvel at the pianists' ability to carry on a literate conversation about a baseball game and simultaneously play strong, sure melody; or, even more impressive, to play melody with one hand and conduct a singalong with the other, cuing the patrons on the lyrics a half-bar in front, like Ray Bolger in "Once in Love with Amy." Jazz-cocktail-cabaret pianists rarely achieve this verbal dexterity. I can be playing a tune I've played a thousand times - "My Romance," whose melody is as ingrained in me as my mother's name - and if someone attempts to talk to me, even a simple request requiring but a yes or no on my part (though the "no" would necessitate explanation), I immediately lose my way, the melody under my fingers trails off into a series of meandering runs or random chords; and once the trail is lost there is no picking it up again, unless you care to sound like a broken record.

If I am in a room where a pianist is performing I can always tell, even blocked from his view, when someone is trying to converse with him: the rhythmic structure instantly collapses, the melody fades and runs every which way like molasses on a hot stove. A semblance of music still emerges, for pianists and guitarists - by virtue of their many strings - are able to dissemble, covering the lost melody with aimless arpeggios and chord progressions; and we take solace in the knowledge that most patrons of bars and restaurants are according us but a fraction of their attention. In The Composer, a former New York jazz club, I was listening to pianist John Mehegan improvise a Bach rendition of "My Funny Valentine." It was intricate work, and he was concentrating very hard. A woman wearing a rabbit fur around her shoulders approached and asked if he would play "Shine on Harvest Moon." He tried to indicate by a widening of eyes and contorted expression that he was exceedingly busy. The woman repeated the request, wondering at his lack of response; perhaps, like Beethoven, he was deaf. John's eyes bulged, his face grew fiery. The music poured out - complex, marvelous counterpoint. The woman kept after him; she tapped him on the shoulder and spoke loudly into his ear. John broke off, slowly drawing his hands into his lap. His shoulders slumped, his head bent; I thought he was going to sob. In a low voice, from between clenched teeth, he informed the woman, "I am sorry, madam, but the management does not employ me to play that type of composition."

People seem to lose their wits around musicians. In the same room where a pianist is performing they will drop coins in a jukebox and turn up the volume of a game show on the television set. A portly businessman approached me in a hotel cocktail lounge; he and a colleague were seated at a table near the

piano. He thrust his face into mine and said, "Do you have to do what you're doing?" The phrasing was odd; it suggested that what I was doing was generating amorphous noise, an impossible distraction. I said, "You mean play the piano?" He nodded; his face was red with anger. I said, "I'm employed here. I'll play more softly if you like." He turned away without another word. I had been made to feel like a recalcitrant child, scolded for banging a spoon on a dishpan. I have seen patrons try to converse with horn players while they are in mid-chorus and grow impatient and vexed when conversation is not reciprocated. A trumpeter-bandleader I worked with at a central Massachusetts country club was importuned one night by a club member while he was playing the lead on a ballad. After repeating her request several times and getting no satisfaction, she reached up - the band was on a two-foot-high stage - and began tugging on the sleeve of the arm holding the horn. "Martin, didn't you hear me? My husband wants you to play 'Get Me to the Church on Time.'" Marty stopped playing; he looked down at the woman with a tight, controlled smile. "Mrs. Prentice, I am not capable of playing the trumpet and talking to you out of the corner of my mouth at one and the same time." But a Dixieland trumpet player I knew in Worcester could do just this. His embouchure was way over to the right side and he spoke out of the left. I never saw a patron curious about or surprised by this skill; musicians were awed. One night the drummer in the band printed a sign and surreptitiously taped it to the front of the trumpet player's music stand; it said, "Place a quarter in the bell of the horn and hear the freak speak."

(A digression on bandleaders - a character in a 1977 novel of mine was a redheaded society bandleader named Lyman Robbin. He called his group Red Robbin and His Birds of Rhythm. An editor tried to persuade me to change the name; he thought it silly and not credible. I had to assure him that if there was ever a bandleader fortuitously named Robbin, and if his hair was a color that could be remotely described as red, it was inevitable that he would call his organization Red Robbin and His Birds of Rhythm or His Bobbin' Rhythm Birds or some variation. I worked in upstate New York with a leader named Emmett Ewe; of course he called his group Emmett Ewe and His Rams. I learned later his real name was Ewing and he had shortened it for commercial advantage. He'd start off each set calling, "Ready, Rams?" and we'd all answer, "Baaaaa-a-a-a," and he'd say, "Then away we go!" Emmett had a colorful way of calling off tunes: " 'Fly me,' three grapes," meaning "Fly Me to the Moon" in E-flat. If a section's intonation bothered him he'd holler, like a crazed logger, "Timmmmmmm-ber!" His business cards read, "Give Us a Ring - We Would Like the Engagement.")

A curious distortion in the public's attitude toward musicians takes place on summer-resort jobs. I have been asked numerous times, during breaks, what I do during the "regular season" or what I do for a living. It must have to do with the summer-vacation ambience, the inability to connect a person apparently having fun playing fine old tunes - the lake or ocean within view through the picture window - with a means of livelihood. Yet they hear a professional sound emerging, they see my hands moving with dexterity, they must assume that years of work prepared the hands to function at that level of competency. In Worcester I grew up with and studied with a virtuoso jazz pianist, Jaki Byard. Jaki has recorded some thirty albums under his own name; he has been featured at major jazz festivals throughout the world; he

has played solo concerts illustrating the history and evolution of jazz piano in prestigious halls; he has written countless arrangements and jazz suites for Charles Mingus, Maynard Ferguson, and other luminaries; during the last months of Duke Ellington's life, when he was too ill to perform, Jaki was asked to take over the piano bench; other musicians speak of him in awed tones; the late Rahsaan Roland Kirk called him "The Living Emperor of Jazz Piano." Yet when hometown friends come to New York and phone or visit with him, they invariably greet him, "Hey, Jaki, still foolin' around with the piano?"

It was after one in the morning. I had just emerged from a job in one of the banquet rooms of the Sir Francis Drake Hotel and saw a man of about fifty walking back and forth across Powell Street singing loudly, in a resonant, near-professional voice, snatches of old standards: a tattered, strutting, slovenly figure in stained clothes. His feet did a little dance as he sang, and his arms flailed. Knots of people had gathered on the curbs to watch, others veered away in fright. He may have been drunk, but more likely he had a lot of marbles loose - who can explain the ranters and shouters? Careening across the cable-car tracks, oblivious to traffic, he would sing a few bars of a song before jumping abruptly to another. The lyrics were all highly sophisticated, as popular lyrics go; they were songs I knew and loved from the golden decades of the Thirties, Forties, and Fifties. I moved along the curb, staying with him, wondering what he would go into next. The voice boomed down the street, the lyrics sharply articulated. He sang, "I don't like crap games with Barons and Earls" and "Let there be wind, occasional rain, chili con carne, sparkling champagne" and "I can't mention his name with propriety, he's a pillar of Gotham society."

This last fragment caught me up; the line was from an out-of-print tune I've been trying to track down for years, "The Honorable Mr. So and So." I had had enough to drink on the job to feel up to confronting him. I waited until his next swing back across the street. When he was within a few feet I said, "The lyrics from 'The Honorable Mr. So and So' - do you know the rest of them?" He broke off and stopped; a powerful reek emanated from him. His pale eyes burned at me for a moment, then darted away. He began to move quickly down the center of the street, south, toward the Tenderloin. I followed at a discreet distance. After about a block he began to sing again. But I wasn't about to pursue him into those dim alleys. As I turned back to the humdrum night I noticed a peculiar thing. The passers-by, the knots of watching people, were now regarding me with the slightest edge of distrust, of fear. The crazed sophisticate had tarnished me with his lovely passion.

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LETTERS

Letters are welcome from members. Excerpts believed to be of general interest are passed along in this section of THE RAGTIMER.

(Ed. Comment: Those who attended last year's 'Bash' will recall the outstanding stride piano of ROSS PETOT... 'Snowy Mornin' Blues', 'If Dreams Come True', etc. The following excerpt from a letter from Ross's father Charles Petot brings us up to date on his current activities.)

Ross will graduate from Wittenburg University at Springfield, Ohio in June with his B.A. in Music. He will enter Bowling Green University at Bowling Green, Ohio this Fall to begin work on his Masters degree in piano.

Charles E. Petot,
Cleveland Hts., Ohio.

* * *

I am trying to locate all known Scott Joplin autographs for an article on the subject. I became interested in the subject because I recently became the proud owner of the original Joplin Maple Leaf Rag contract acquired from John Stark Publishing Co.

The only other Joplin autographs I know of are the printed Treemonisha score owned by Rudi Blesh with revisions in Joplin's hand, and copyright applications by Joplin when his company published his music. The original copyright applications are in the Copyright Office, Washington.

James J. Fuld,
300 Park Avenue, Room 2100,
New York, N.Y. 10022

* * *

SOMETHING DOING...

JOHN ARPIN

Chelsea Inn, 33 Gerrard St. W., Toronto. In "The Piano Bar" M-F 5-8 p. m., and with his trio in "The Chelsea Bun" lounge M-S 9 p. m. to 1 a. m.

BRIAN AND KATHY BAUER

Redjacket Inn, 7001 Buffalo Ave., Niagara Falls, N. Y. Appearing as "Dr. Jazz and His Jazzmanian Devils" with Bill Fisher & Fritz Raiser, every Friday from 9 p. m. to 1 a. m.

STEEN CHRISTENSEN

Mechanical Music Museum (MMM), Vesterbrodage 150, Copenhagen, Denmark. Performs the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of each month.

CHRYSANTHEMUM RAGTIME BAND

Hotel Utah, 4th and Bryant Streets, San Francisco, California. Performing the second Saturday of each month.

DON EWELL

Esplanade Lounge, Royal Orleans Hotel, New Orleans, La. A piano player par excellence - ragtime, Morton style, and Waller style.

DAVE FLOWITT

Brunswick Hotel, Brunswick St., Toronto. With Dr. McJazz Band, Thursday through Saturday, 9 p. m. to 1 a. m.

Chelsea Inn, 33 Gerrard St. W., Toronto. With the Chelsea Chasers Trio and Dr. McJazz Band (alternating weeks), on Saturdays, 2-5 p. m.

GALE FOEHNER

Stillson Street Garage and Restaurant, 23 Stillson St., Rochester, New York. Plays ragtime, jazz, and blues on Wednesdays, from 8:00 p. m. to midnight.

GEORGE FOLEY

Barnhill's Restaurant, 6339 Olde York Road, Parma Heights, Ohio. Plays Thursday through Sunday, 7 p. m. to midnight, on the 7-foot Orchestra Piano.

ROBIN FROST

Olive Mill Bistro, 1295 Coast Village Road, Montecito (Santa Barbara), Calif. Frost plays with The Bistro All Stars, every Sunday 9:30 p. m. to 12:30 a. m.

ROBERT GOODNOW

Broadmoor Hotel, Colorado Springs, Colorado.

EDDIE GREEN

Proctor House Restaurant, Lowell St., Peabody, Mass. Green (known to Society members as Ed Greenberg) plays Wed., Thurs., Fri., and some Saturdays. He doesn't play rags, but he enjoys ragtime and would like to meet any Ragtime Society members in the area.

RALPH GRUEGEL

Peabody's, Cedar and Taylor Road, Cleveland Heights, Ohio. With The Eagle Jazz Band, Friday, 8-12 p. m.

The Roadhouse, 8425 Old Route "8", Northfield Center, Ohio. Appearing on Saturdays.

TERRY HARTZEL

Il Porto Ristorante, 121 King St., Alexandria, Virginia. Mondays only. Ragtime piano.

JOHN HASSE

The Ordinary, Nashville, Indiana. Appearing Friday and Saturday nights.

TOM "JAZZOO" JONES

The Paddlewheel Bar, "Mississippi Queen," New Orleans to Vicksburg.

JIM KAPLAN

Pizza-Stein, 1428 W. Galena Ave., Freeport, Illinois. Appearing on Tuesday, Friday, and Sunday.

TOM LOUGH

Loose Caboose, KSU Eastway Center, Kent, Ohio. Jazz piano. Friday, 4-8 p. m.

JOHNNY MADDOX

Il Porto Ristorante, 121 King St., Alexandria, Virginia. Appearing Tuesday through Sunday.

BOB MILNE

Charley's Crab Restaurant, Troy, Mich. (I-75 at Crook's Road Exit). Appears 4 p. m. to 12:30 a. m. daily, including Sunday (alternating with Bob Seeley).

MIKE MONTGOMERY

Rathskeller, The Dakota Inn, John R. Road (north of McNichols), Detroit, Michigan. Appearing Friday nights.

NEW SUNSHINE JAZZ BAND

Biltmore Ballroom (upstairs), 1811 Columbia Rd., N.W., Washington, D.C. Appearing the 3rd Sunday and 1st Wednesday of every month, 9 p.m. - midnight.

DR. ELI NEWBERGER

Sticky Wicket Pub, West Main St., Hopkinton, Massachusetts. Appearing with the New Black Eagle Jazz Band (pianist, Bob Pilsbury), Thursdays, 8-12 p.m.

DARYL OTT

The Fishmarket Back Room, 106 King St., Alexandria, Virginia. Solo ragtime piano nightly.

QUEEN CITY RAGTIME ENSEMBLE

Zeno's 1421 Larimer, Denver, Colorado. Performs with the Queen City Jazz Band every Friday and Saturday, approx. 10 p.m.

RAGTIME REVIVAL

Joe's Bar, Terrace Hilton Hotel, W. 6th off Vine, Cincinnati, Ohio. Features Robin Hopkins on banjo and Marty Hodap on tuba, along with a drummer, playing ragtime, vintage jazz, and old-time songs.

BOB SEELEY

Charley's Crab Restaurant, Troy, Mich. (I-75 at Crook's Rd. Exit) Appears 4 p.m. to 12:30 a.m. daily, including Sunday (alternating with Bob Milne).

RICHARD SKRIKA

Lee's Imperial Tavern, Riverside Drive, Windsor, Ontario. Pianist with the Eric Mannering New Imperial Jazz Band. Every Saturday, 4-7 p.m.

STEVE SPRACKLEN

Paddlewheel Lounge, Mississippi Queen (between New Orleans and St. Paul).

TREBOR TICHENOR

Goldenrod Showboat, St. Louis, Missouri. Appears every Saturday night. Trebor also has a weekly radio show on KWMU-FM (90.7), "Ragophile with Trebor Tichenor," Fridays, 7-8 p.m.

TARHEEL TICKLER

Sportsmen's Lounge, Onslow Drive (off Highway 17), Jacksonville, North Carolina, Friday & Saturday, 9:00 p.m. - 2:00 a.m.

JERRY TRAUNIG

Brownstone Restaurant, Hartford, Connecticut.

TERRY WALDO

Crazy Horse Saloon, Bush Blvd., at Route 161 (near I-71), Columbus, Ohio. Appears with singer Susan Lamarche, Sundays, 8 p. m. to 1 a. m.

TEX WYNDHAM

The Green Room, Hotel DuPont, 11th & Market Sts., Wilmington, Dela. Appears with The Red Lion Jazz Band, 1st Friday every month, 8:30 p. m. to 12:30 a. m. Phone (302) 656-8121.

PERFORMERS TO WATCH FOR!

EUBIE BLAKE performs frequently at concerts and festivals. He also makes guest appearances on TV talk shows and radio programs. Watch your local paper - don't miss Eubie!

PETER FAHRENHOLTZ tours regularly in Denmark (and occasionally in other European countries). He plays solo ragtime and also with bands.

GLENN MEYER makes regular appearances with his band in the St. Louis, Missouri, area.

MAX MORATH is on the road with "Living a Ragtime Life". Watch for it!

TOM NOEL is on the road with two living portrayal shows: "Mark Twain at Home" and "Mr. Jelly Lord," the latter based on the life of Jelly Roll Morton.

RAGTIME RADIO

TREBOR TICHENOR has a weekly show called "Ragophile with Trebor Tichenor," on KWMU-FM (90.7, St. Louis, Missouri), Fridays, 7-8 p. m.

HANK TROY's ragtime program is on KVOD-FM (Denver, Colorado), Tuesdays, 6:30 - 7:00 p. m.

TERRY WALDO hosts "This Is Ragtime" on National Public Radio. Check your local listings for this weekly half-hour show.

GALEN WILKES presents "The Ragtime Years," a weekly half-hour show, on WVHC-FM (88.7, Hempstead, Long Island, N. Y.), on Tuesdays, 9-9:30 p. m.

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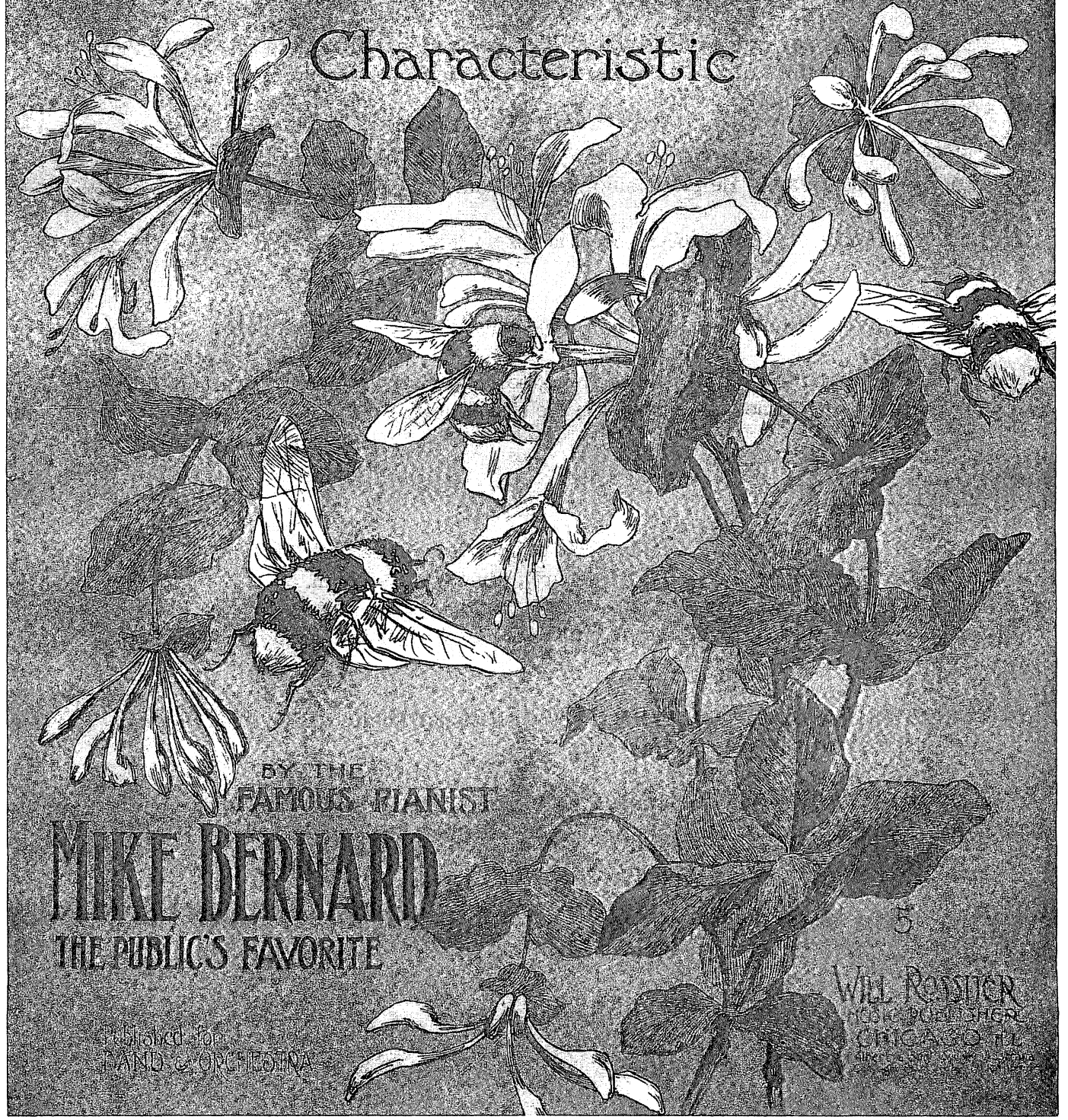
A-REAL-RAG-TIME-TWO-STEP

THE STINGING BEE

Characteristic



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